

**Lower Snake River District
Resource Advisory Council Meeting
Idaho State Office, Sagebrush/Ponderosa Room
August 26, 2003**

Council Members Present: Bob Baker, Gil Green, Donna Griffin, Russ Heughins, Ted Howard, Sandra Mitchell, Bill Platts, Rick Raymondi, Brenda Richards, John Robison, Chris Salove, and Don Weilmunster

Council Members Absent: Bob Amidon. Kenneth Reid and Brian Schrage

BLM Advisory Present: K Lynn Bennett, State Director; Glen Secrist, District Manager and Designated Federal Official, BLM-LSRD; M.J. Byrne, Public Affairs Specialist and RAC Coordinator, BLM-LSRD and; Mary Jones, Recorder

Other BLM Staff Present: J.O. Ratliff, Special Assistant, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals Management, DOI; Fritz Rennebaum, District Manager, Upper Columbia-Salmon Clearwater District; Jack Sept, Special Liaison, BLM-ISO; Cheryl Zwang, External Affairs Chief, BLM-ISO; Daryl Albiston, Four Rivers Field Office, Manager, Rosey Thomas, LSRD Fire and Aviation Office Manager; Mike Ferguson, Associate State Director, BLM-ISO; Jenna Whitlock, Owyhee Field Office, Manager; J.R. Epps, Fuels Coordinator, LSRD, and; Eddie Guerrero, Jarbidge Field Office, Manager.

Statements attributed to individual Council members are not direct quotes unless so indicated.

Council Business, General Information and Opening Remarks:

Chairman Weilmunster called the meeting to order at 9:25 a.m. Council members, BLM Idaho State Director and others were thanked for coming. K Lynn Bennett introduced JO Ratliff Special Assistant to Rebecca Watson. **Minutes** from the May 21, 2003 RAC meeting were certified.

Idaho BLM Organizational Refinement – Status Report – K Lynn Bennett and Fritz Rennebaum

Background: K Lynn explained that he was requested to look at the Idaho BLM organization to find ways to make it more accessible, user friendly and to increase customer service. In this regard, he requested Fritz to take the lead. K Lynn requested the RAC to provide a written recommendation on the proposed reorganization by the end of the day in order to go forward to the Washington Office with a proposal.

Fritz reported that he met with various county commissioners, BLM-Idaho's three RAC's, environmental groups, and other stakeholder groups interested in how BLM-Idaho is doing business and discussed with them their ideas for how BLM-Idaho's organization could be made more user and customer friendly. He also met with a number of BLM employees across the state. Following these discussions, he submitted a report to K Lynn

Bennett with a list of recommendations. The following key elements of the recommended organization refinement were outlined:

- A new South Central District would be established and headquartered in Twin Falls. It would be comprised of the Shoshone, Burley and Jarbidge Field Offices. The South Central District Office would be co-located with the Jarbidge Field Office and the Sawtooth National Forest.
- The Owyhee and Bruneau Field Offices, which merged in 2000, would be separated.
- The Owyhee Field Office would move to Marsing. The Bruneau Field Office would remain in Boise.
- The Field Office boundaries would follow the Owyhee and Bruneau planning unit boundaries.
- The Jarbidge Field Office would join the new South Central District.
- The Challis and Salmon Field Offices would become part of the Upper Snake River District office. The physical office locations would remain the same.
- The Coeur d'Alene and Cottonwood Field Offices would remain Field Offices, attached to the Upper Columbia-Salmon Clearwater District Office in Coeur d'Alene.
- The Shoshone and Burley Field Offices would leave the Upper Snake River District and would become part of the new South Central District. Both field offices would remain in their present locations.

Fritz reported that the goal is to accomplish these proposals without large increases in funding or staffing; however, this will require an additional District Manager and a new Field Office Manager. Fritz said that BLM is exploring a range of options for moving the Owyhee Field Office to Marsing. These options include moving the entire office; opening a seasonal office, and; moving some staff and not others. Moving all the Owyhee Field Office staff to a location in Marsing would be the most expensive option.

Discussion: Dr. Platts pointed out that the LSRD RAC Charter prevents the RAC from making any recommendations on personnel actions or budget; however, the RAC can decide if the recommendations better serve the public and can make recommendations regarding the concept of reorganization. It was suggested that additional outreach be conducted regarding this proposal before a recommendation is made and that consultation with the Tribes be conducted. After considerable discussion the RAC agreed to support the concept of the proposed organizational refinement, with the agreement that Fritz would provide to the RAC his report to K Lynn Bennett detailing who was contacted, number of constituents who would be better served with the proposed refinement, positives and negatives of the various proposals, financial considerations, and timelines for implementation. It was further agreed that a letter would be drafted for Chairman Don Weilmunster's signature and forwarded to K Lynn Bennett by September 10, 2003.

Initial Action: Fritz to provide a copy of his report to Council members. Once the Council sees the package, there will be an opportunity to review and comment where appropriate.

Later in the meeting, Bob Baker reminded the RAC that there was a presentation earlier in the day regarding realignment of the offices. Russ and others had reservations; however, in the interest of what was asked, Bob recommended that the RAC endorse the *concept* of providing more people, easier access to the ground and providing better service to the public. ***Motion made by Bob Baker that the RAC endorse the concept of reallocating the BLM LSRD resources with the understanding that there would be an***

opportunity to review the complete report regarding the proposal. The motion was seconded by Sandra Mitchell. A show of hands indicated all RAC Members present were in favor, with the exception of Russ Heughins voting against the motion. Ted Howard abstained because he said additional consultation between the Tribes and BLM was necessary. Tribes would like the monthly Wings and Roots meetings to continue to be held in Boise. Tribes should not have to travel more to consult with field offices, BLM's obligation to consult with tribes.

Owyhee Initiative – Status Report – Brenda Richards, Dr. Chad Gibson and John McCarthy

Background: Dr. Gibson stated that the goal of the Owyhee Initiative (OI) is, “To develop and implement a landscape-scale program in Owyhee County that preserves the natural processes that create and maintain a functioning, un-fragmented landscape supporting and sustaining a flourishing community of human, plant and animal life, that provides for economic stability by preserving livestock grazing as an economically viable use, and that provides for protection of cultural resources.” The method for achieving this goal was to bring together diverse interests to address contentious land use debates by forming the Owyhee Initiative Working Group and several subcommittees.

Since early October, 2001, the following groups have met and worked together at Owyhee Initiative Work Group and subcommittee meetings, participating fully in discussions reaching toward the goal set by the Board of Commissioners: Owyhee County, Owyhee Cattlemen's Association, Owyhee Borderlands Trust, Owyhee County Soil conservation Districts, Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association, Idaho Conservation League, the Wilderness Society, The Nature Conservancy, the Sierra Club, People for the Owyhee's and the United States Air Force. The Bureau of Land Management and the Idaho Department of Lands have worked with these organizations, providing information and participating in discussions. Dr. Gibson touched on a few of what he called the cornerstone elements that have been identified to accomplish the goals established by the Owyhee County Commissioners.

- *Owyhee Initiative Board of Directors* will advocate, encourage, facilitate and administer programs, as well as provide guidance and oversight of the Initiative's implementation. The board of directors would preserve some institutional memory and ensure scientific information is properly employed and applied, seek funding for projects and programs identified to fulfill the purposes of the Initiative. The Board of Directors will have their own RAC who would advise the Board of Directors on issues as directed by the Board
- *A Scientific Review Process* will provide for peer review by resource management specialists of proposed BLM actions, by assuring the use and application of valid, applicable and effective science in grazing and resource management and administration.
- *Conservation Research Center* would serve as a central point to recommend development, funding and implementation of OI landscape conservation and research as well as to distribute new information.

The Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) Act has created issues for Owyhee County for a number of years. The Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers (WSR) working sub-group has a goal of resolving the status of WSA by designating some wilderness and releasing others to multiple use management. They will also propose other special designations to achieve specific management to reach a balance between wilderness and multiple use to further the overall goals of the Initiative.

Another element of the Owyhee Initiative is *Travel and Recreation*. The goal would be to implement a specified time line for travel plans that meet public demand for recreational vehicle use as well as other recreational pursuits in a manner that does not degrade natural landscape values and function.

To accomplish some of these goals, the Work Group will develop a proposal including a legislative package, and submit it to the Board of County Commissioners. The Commissioners can then request the assistance of Idaho's Congressional Delegation to gain support for passage and implementation of the total proposal. This legislation would:

- Establish purpose, process and authorizations necessary to achieve the operational activities that will accomplish the goal and elements of the Owyhee Initiative.
- Resolve wilderness and wild and scenic rivers boundaries and management.
- Address recreational access to wilderness and wild and scenic rivers destinations.
- Provide for realty actions necessary to resolve wilderness and WSR issues.

Discussion: BLM has been consulted regarding the Travel and Recreation Plan. Director Bennett advised the BLM RAC that the BLM was neutral on the issue, attended the OI meetings as an un-official member. Howard Hedrick, Jenna Whitlock, John Hatch and Frank Jenks have attended many of the Initiative meetings. The scientific panel/peer review is something that the RAC is currently chartered to do and this could be a duplication of effort. The RAC is not being asked for endorsement of the Initiative – the purpose of the presentation is as an informational update only. The intent of the Initiative is not to take power from the BLM or to take its place but the vision and hope is to supplement BLM efforts and make more site specific, accurate, and on-the-ground decisions than what the BLM can accomplish. There was discussion regarding the advisory board, proposed board of directors, how things such as environmental assessments will be handled, role of RACs and the involvement of hunting groups.

Action Item: Brenda will provide MJ with a letter on the Initiative with contact information for those wishing to be involved. MJ will mail a copy of the letter to all RAC Members. (A copy of letter is attached.)

Public Comment

Jon Marvel, Western Watersheds Project Executive Director

Jon thanked the RAC for the opportunity to speak on the Owyhee Initiative. His group has been excluded and therefore they can't consider the process as a collaborative or cooperative effort. He has received information from the conservation groups about what is going on and there wasn't much until February of this year when things changed and became more formalized regarding mapping of proposed wilderness areas, the county

giving up RS 2477 claims, scientific and research panels, etc. This is precedent setting and will provide something for an individual county that will not exist for other counties and is not a good precedent. In addition, the way the panels are set up is a concern and if a scientific review is needed, there are plenty of ways to do that. This is a way for ranchers to protect their interests and the Initiative is to protect ranchers. Mr. Gibson, Mr. Grant and the ranchers involved seek to have wilderness rather than WSAs because more can be done for ranching. Wildlife habitat, sage-grouse, red-band trout, and bighorn sheep are a concern. The RAC is asked to consider very carefully what is being created and if it is an acceptable practice. It is not acceptable for one particular county – does this mean that other counties in other states are going to have their own scientific review panel and county board outside the decision making line with an influence on the BLM that no one else has. If there is support for the Initiative when things come up it will need to be justified.

Katie Fite – Committee for Idaho’s High Desert

Would like to address the RAC on the Owyhee Initiative but would also like to request the RAC look into the BLM policy of allowing permittees to use bulldozers to put in fences. A letter has been sent to the Owyhee Field Office Manager regarding this issue with no response to date. (Photographs of subject dozer and fence were shared with the RAC but are not available as part of the record).

The Owyhee Initiative may ease the way for these types of practices. Request the RAC look into BLM actions regarding water rights and it would be important to have BLM explain some of the situations relative to permittees and where they stand. These discussions are hidden from the public. Amazed at the back-peddling of organizations and the appearance of a process of secrecy. The public suspects that the advisory board will also be secret. FACA means open to the public and the various boards the Initiative sets up are not subject to FACA; therefore, public exclusion. Having worked on the wilderness proposal for Owyhee County with the American Lands Alliance, it was endorsed by various environmental organizations and the information was on the web site with different numbers of acreage. Wilderness acreage varies on what is suitable and there is confusion about who can use the roads. Will the ranchers be able to use the roads and others excluded? What happens to areas that are released from Wilderness Study Areas? The redundancy, the confusion, and the secrecy surrounding this are not needed and it’s a mistake.

Subcommittee Reports

Sage-grouse Habitat Management and Wind Energy Proposal – Rick Raymondi

Background: In February the subgroup received a copy of the Draft EA and other materials on wind testing and in May the subgroup was ready to submit their comments. There was concern about the testing and some recommendations/suggestions were presented, one of which was to increase research. In June, RAC members, subcommittee members, and BLM personnel visited the Browns Bench and received the Interim Wind Energy Development Policy. With the observations and the interim guidance, a second set of comments on the EA, dated July 8, 2003, were sent to BLM from the RAC

reiterating the concerns of allowing for four meteorological (met) towers for testing sustained winds and for the feasibility of large scale wind energy production on public land that was prime sage-grouse habitat, and recommending the application for testing be denied. The subgroup drafted a letter and submitted it to the full RAC and Chairman Weilmunster for signature. Since that time, Chairman Weilmunster has received a letter from Mr. Scott Piscitello, Development Manager for RES North America requesting a meeting with the RAC's Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Subcommittee members and other RAC members to discuss these concerns and address proposed mitigation measures. Rick is currently trying to set up a meeting for September or October – all RAC members will be invited to participate.

Discussion: In the process of finalizing the EA, additional information is being evaluated and changes incorporated. The Tribes are concerned about the project and will be submitting comments. There was discussion about the area, maps showing stronghold areas for sage-grouse lek sites, the cultural importance of the area, etc.

Action: The RAC subgroup will review the final EA before it's approved. Any new information obtained during the RAC's Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Subcommittee meeting with RES of North America will be shared with the all LSRD RAC members.

Recommendation: *Motion made by Bill Platts and Seconded by Russ Heughins that the Subgroup act on this and make recommendations without coming back to the full RAC.* Chris Salove and Rick Raymondi abstained from voting, Brenda Richards and Bob Baker were opposed to the motion and all others were in favor.

PRESENTATION - Draft BLM National Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy - Presentation - Mark Hilliard

Background: There is a lot going on and a lot of confusion regarding the strategy. Director Clarke met with representatives from U.S. Fish and Wildlife to see what could be done to head-off listing of sage-grouse. As a result of this meeting, all agreed that BLM staff would need to develop a clearer conservation strategy. In March 2003, a workshop was held and top experts were brought in to share what is known, what isn't and what activities are currently underway. Workshop attendees considered some examples of what the strategy might look like. From the very beginning of the strategy development, staff has considered input from the RAC's and those they represent. Mark provided a PowerPoint presentation outlining this draft strategy (copy attached).

Discussion: The RAC discussed how the Land Use Plans will deal with sage-grouse and provide potential national guidance. Lack of funding is one of the problems for implementation on the ground and the Land Use Plans are pretty broad. Local working groups and conservation plans are very critical and each entity including private landowners need to do their part. State level strategies and BLM coordination with state and local working groups is considered critical to the overall goal of preventing listing and increasing sage-grouse populations. Some of the Land Use Plans may need amending but these documents won't affect local working groups. Where no local working groups exist, jurisdiction will fall under the State conservation plan. All parties need to understand that some of the decisions happening now will have an affect later.

Action: The RAC recommended that the Tribes be added to the list for consultation and coordination.

Subcommittee Reports (Continued)

Off Highway Vehicle and Transportation Management – Donna Griffin

Background: The National Strategy is complete and work is continuing on the Statewide strategy. At the last meeting an outline of the 3 sections was provided as well as how BLM staff will treat the site specific plans in the RMPs and the transportation plan. The subgroup has gone through the letters and comments and these have been incorporated into the statewide strategy. The subgroup is working with the other two RACs on this issue.

Discussion: None

Action: A copy of the Statewide Strategy will be provided to the RAC before it's signed.

River Recreation and Resource Management – Donna Griffin

Background: A concerted effort was made over the summer to get out safety messages and this effort was well received and the campaign very successful. The past weekend was the Payette River Cleanup and it was also a very successful event.

Discussion: The float trip for the RAC has been cancelled since only 3 members indicated an interest in attending.

Action: The RAC requested, again, that they be taken on a float trip of the Bruneau River next spring, if the weather and water level are such that a trip can safely be conducted.

Fire and Fuels Management – Donna Griffin, Rosey Thomas and J.R. Epps

2003 Fire Season Update

Background: The LSRD had a warm, wet spring, so extra measures were taken to ensure preparation for a busy fire season – partnerships were established and fire stations were shared and staffed throughout the season. Approximately \$231,000 was transferred to rural fire departments with some of the money used to purchase used BLM equipment. The LSRD has good mid-level management with its Type III teams and these teams had five assignments this summer. The close liaison with management holds down costs and sets a framework so transition is easier and safer for incoming teams. Every county in SW Idaho will receive funding this year for completing the fire mitigation plans. Large strides have been made in the use of contractors in fire suppression and fuels management. The Duck Valley Indian Reservation has led the way in this effort. A handout (attached to these notes) was provided about the current status of the LSRD Fire Program is this year.

Discussion: Ted shared the history on the partnership with Duck Valley and hopes the good partnership can continue to protect the resources.

Action Items: None

Draft Fire Management Plan (FMP)

Background: Rosey introduced J.R. Epps who was recently hired as the District fuels coordinator. The BLM is mandated to have all Fire Management Plans (FMPs) completed by October 2004. A contractor has been hired to take the existing Land Use Planning guidance and format it so all the information can be consolidated and consistent. The LSRD currently has five Land Use plans, which will be consolidated into one FMP.

A Normal Year Fire Rehabilitation Plan will be developed so the staff can more readily respond and 100% of the district will be covered. An important link in the development of the District FMP is the line to the Land Use Plans. The District FMP will incorporate previous Fire Management Zones, Phase I (A-D polygons) direction, district wildland fire history, fire condition class mapping, and vegetation cover type mapping into Fire Management Units (FMUs) that reflect current administrative boundaries. The FMP will summarize how prescribed fire, wildland fire use for resource benefit and fire suppression can and will be used to meet resource goals and objectives identified in the RMPs and Management Framework Plans. In addition to the FMP, there are several fuels projects underway, (1) Pixley Basin prescribed burn in the Owyhee Field Office (OFO), (2) Juniper Mtn, also in the OFO and (3) the Silver City plan where fuels reduction work was done over the summer with more scheduled for next year. Actions include mechanical thinning along the roadside and logging practices.

Discussion: Bob Baker asked if there was a way to incorporate invasive weed strategies along with mechanical fuel removal opportunities. One of the first monitoring strategies is for the weed crew to visit a site for two consecutive years and act appropriately. The problem lies with the follow-up monitoring and consistency with federal, state, and private lands. BLM does trade acres of monitoring with State and private landowners. The FMP will incorporate existing Land Use Plans and once areas are identified for fire and cleared after an Environmental Assessment has been completed under the National Environmental Policy Act, there will be an opportunity to determine the possibility of looking at something other than complete suppression.

Action: MJ will provide updates about the FMP to the RAC's Fire and Fuels Management Subcommittee as it becomes available.

Resource Management Plans (RMPs) – Gil Green

Background: The Desired Future Conditions (DFCs), (Goals and Standards) are now complete. There was fair to good participation at the Data Fairs. The RMP Interdisciplinary (ID) teams are now working on objectives and alternatives. Staff has continued drafting the No Action (current management alternative), which is pretty close to being final. At the last RAC meeting a report was made regarding a series of small group meetings that will be held to develop objectives, which will be based on the issues and DFCs. These meetings will take place in September and October and will be followed by Large Group Integration meetings in late October and early November to develop alternatives. The public will be invited to observe the ID teams as they work through the process and will be afforded an opportunity to comment and make recommendations at both the small and large group meetings. The RAC is encouraged to participate in as many of these meetings as possible and RAC members will be asked to join the team members in completing the "homework" assignment that goes with each meeting. (A copy of the meeting schedule is attached to these notes).

Discussion: This is the part of the RMP process where people really want to be heard and provide comments. RAC members who need to travel to attend these meetings will be provided per-diem to cover lodging

Action: RAC members need to sign up for the meetings they are interested in attending and provide the list to Mary Jones.

Rangeland Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs) – Brenda Richards

Background: The subgroup met in March, then met with Erv Cowley, with Erv providing an update at the May RAC meeting. The subgroup is currently waiting on a report from Erv. Ron Kay provided an update of the general summary of findings of the Consistency Review requested by Idaho BLM Director, K Lynn Bennett, explaining that in implementing S&Gs the Review teams found there is some confusion in how to implement and use data, the need to consolidate and provide instructions to set the system up (including development of protocols), how and when to use new and old information, scale, connection to land use plans, etc.

Discussion: WO has said all assessments need to be completed by 2009. The LSRD has developed a 10- year schedule for ensuring completion.

Action: A good final draft of the Consistency Review will be available in October and sometime in late September Erv will meet with the subgroup. Sufficient review time will be made available.

Sustaining Working Landscape (SWL) Initiative – MJ Byrne and JO Ratliff

Background: JO thanked the RAC for the opportunity to talk about the SWL Initiative. The overall goal of this initiative is to ensure the long-term health and productivity of the public rangelands. It seeks to do that by strengthening partnerships with grazing permittees and by promoting citizen-based stewardship through new management tools. These tools would provide more options and flexibility for resource managers, ranchers, and conservationists to work toward a common goal. (See attached notes for more detailed information). As a result of the 23 public workshops held in the west (3 in Idaho), as well as the national meeting of BLM RAC representatives held in Washington, DC in April, the RAC is requested to respond to the policy development initiative

Discussion: Glen instructed RAC members to refer to Attachment 2, page 3 of the RAC notebook for an explanation of the expectations of RAC's in providing advice to BLM on the SWL Initiative. The comment period will end in November and K Lynn needs to have recommendations from this RAC by November 10. Responses can either be general in nature or more detailed by bullets. Due to time constraints the RAC detailed the following and requested public comment prior to further discussion.

- Bullet number 2 is not an option nor is number 4

Public Comment

Al Lajosz – Citizen

Many of the comments provided by the groups and individuals who participated in the public meetings are not reflected in the comment summary. Cautioned BLM that back in the 1990's BLM had a similar program of CCC called coordination management planning. BLM put a lot of time into this program in the Owyhee Resource Area. BLM spent 2-3 man-years working on 2-3 allotments, never produced anything or reached an agreement or plan but a decision still needed to be issued. This program could be a lot of work and time for BLM employees instead of accomplishing work on the ground. A citizen based local stewardship may exclude publics from decision-making and minimum conservation partnerships are expected. The cooperating participants will have to abide by terms and conditions. Issuing permits – in most cases had to issue decisions to

accomplish them. There is really no difference; these agreements should be no different than what is put on the permits. The Bureau shouldn't spend a lot of time on this program and should spend time on S&G and health assessments. Could spend a lot of time with SWL and not get a lot done. Common allotments are a good idea, don't expect a lot of participation and don't expect the public to pay and if so, it should be the permittee with stipulations that they don't have the ability to increase the size of the permit. Some organizations don't have the ability to meet S&Gs to provide for protection of rangeland. Voluntary restructuring – BLM had the opportunity with the Temporary Non-Renewal Program (TNR) in the Jarbidge Field Office – it's still there and nothing has been done.

Would like to comment on the Owyhee Initiative – Opposed to Initiative regarding the wilderness proposal – difficulties with access and problem in the technical range committee and this is an impairment to BLM who has good people. This could be very political and it is going to cause delays in the decision - making. It will also weaken the public participation process and will give Owyhee County the opportunity to exclude public participation and could create conflict.

Inez Jaca - Rancher

Attended the summit yesterday and spoke with Kathleen Clark and JO regarding non-regulatory changes, conservation, voluntary allotment restructuring, etc. These are troublesome and are unworkable, economically unfeasible and cumbersome and are an insult to her intelligence as a rancher. This is demoralizing to the ranchers and the changes were not written with input from legitimate ranchers whose sole income comes from livestock ranching. An investor who knows nothing about the production of beef wrote it. Encourage the Director to foster a mutual understanding and respect and to build trust between the permittee-rancher and BLM range staff. Best way to achieve this goal is to work with State Director and DM who know the local lands and solutions – let these people do their jobs – don't implement SWL Initiative.

Katie Fite – Committee for Idaho's High Desert

Like Inez, she doesn't like SWL Initiative. Ms. Fite saw no benefit and said she was scared to think that BLM might be contracting with ranchers for some of these services when they could be paying for range construction work. Implementing this Initiative will not serve the public interest.

Brenda Richard – RAC Member representing grazing

Read a Letter from T.W. (Ted) Hoffman, Idaho Cattle Association dated August 26, 2003. Mr. Hoffman was unable to attend but commented on the SWL Initiative and concerns about the potential to create institutional incentives to decrease permitted AUMs. (Comment letter attached to notes).

Jerry Hoagland – Rancher in Reynolds Creek

Mr. Hoagland spoke in opposition to SWL Initiative with concerns about conservation easements. Creating conservation partnerships will mean development of contracts. He was concerned about how the contracts would be developed and the details in them.

Common allotments are not available in the Owyhee Resource Area and livestock changes from pastures. It takes years to adapt to pastures and the “in and out” wouldn’t work. Voluntary allotment restructuring – working with other permittees and for years have been trying to get private allotments to create better management.

Dean Zeller - Citizen

Item #4 isn’t a component of SWL Initiative. These will still be available just not part of the tools. Confused in reading this, when the new version comes out, he wants to know what’s different. Only the names have changed but the tools available to BLM are still the same and have been available to BLM for many years in the Rangeland Standards and Guidelines. Don’t hear much about this and most permittees have the preference of working private allotments and there are reasons these haven’t been used very often. Common/community allotments have been available and can be done but it doesn’t work very well and doesn’t happen very often. Conservation partnerships have been used. Allotment restructuring is redrawing allotment boundaries and this has been done a lot. Really leery about concept 1 and the bottom line is there isn’t a lot of flexibility – it sounds good but it’s hard to accomplish. He felt the SWL Initiative was a “polish job”. He said again that the tools are already in place, so he hoped BLM doesn’t spend a lot of time on this.

Bob Mintor, Boise Resident and President of Ada County Fish and Game League

Was involved in two sessions and opposes this. BLM has the tools to do a better job without starting a new program. As pointed out, more flexibility for permittees would be difficult with grants to maintain or enhance private interest. There are programs in place and if they are enforced and managed they could work. BLM could do a better job to enhance things. His club and others are interested in seeing a better job done by BLM and the permittees in monitoring the health of the allotments. Too many terms and conditions are not being enforced and there are too many AUMs in certain areas, the ground needs rest and need to follow what is being preached. Most of the questions he has raised about this initiative haven’t been answered to his satisfaction. He is opposed to what is being proposed under the SWL Initiative. In regard to the Owyhee Initiative, there is very little in writing on this proposal and his group is not on board. Access is not adequately protected for public recreating and trading of Wild and Scenic Areas that are already protected at the cost or expense to public comment and oversight.

Steve Goddard - citizen

Attended some of the meetings and is concerned. Supplied 14 pages of comments and only about 2 showed up in the summary and they weren’t addressed. It is difficult to read the document and see the benefits to wildlife. Concerned about the specifics and what is being agreed to and what happens for non-compliance. How will compliance be monitored and what constitutes non-compliance. The Range has a certain carrying capacity and it varies from year to year depending on several factors including precipitation. Need flexibility and it is not reflected in this proposed Initiative. The second concern is that BLM has the mechanisms to do this now and they have the scientific people who can do it. Why spend a lot of time and money when it could be spent in dealing with current problems instead of setting up another program. The SWL

Initiative lacks specifics such as how monitoring would be conducted. How will this be determined and what happens when someone is noncompliant?

Additional Discussion: Ted Howard said The Shoshone- Paiute's appreciate the relationship the tribes have developed over the past eight years with the LSRD and many turbulent and difficult issues have been dealt with. We must do what is right for the land and the resources. He said society is very near sighted. We must look at what we are leaving for future generations. The Duck Valley Indian Reservation is a ranching community. Today, ranching is taking a different turn with corporations that have a large number of cattle, and they are destroying habitat and riparian areas. Conditions on the lands have changed and the RAC needs to look at what is happening. Science is important but it doesn't address spirituality and culture.

He said, "The BLM has never explained the unique relationship the tribes have with the U.S. Government and the agencies as documented in history, U.S. Constitution, treaties, court decisions, etc... As I listen to the discussion today, the tribes are never considered or mentioned. The RAC is supposed to advise the BLM on how to proceed with the management of public lands. And the RAC has no idea of the unique standing of federally recognized tribes. The BLM has trust obligations to the tribes as dictated in the various laws and Executive Orders as well as their own, '8160 Consultation and Coordination' with tribal governments. The RAC must understand these obligations and consider them as they advise the BLM on how to proceed. The tribes are not asking for special treatment, all we ask is to be treated fairly."

Bill Platts – He has been disappointed with SWL Initiative and how it has been handled. Dr. Platts attended the first "listening" session held in Idaho in Boise by BLM in April, and several comments that were made at that session have not been brought forward into the summary. He said he and others are confused about why all of a sudden BLM is going to try and push this. He felt this is a Washington Office Initiative, with no evidence of any economic analysis, budget, etc. and the RAC has never addressed this as something to pursue.

Recommendation: *Motion made by Brenda Richards and seconded by Russ Heughins that a vote be taken to see if the RAC wants to proceed with this or not. Show of hands for proceeding with this indicated no one was in favor. Show of hands for not proceeding with this indicated all were in favor and the motion carried.*

Action Item: A resolution letter outlining the discussion and decisions regarding SWL Initiative will be sent from Chairman Weilmunster to the DFO for forwarding to the State Director Bennett will be prepared. RAC Members will have an opportunity to review and provide input into this letter.

Field Office Updates

Owyhee Field Office - Jenna Whitlock

- S&G schedule for the Owyhee field office with explanation on progress and remaining work.

- Working on settlement of appeals - this is being done Idaho State Office staff, Tom Miles with the help of Wayne Burkhart, who is on contract.
- Anticipate executing the Pixley Basin prescribed burn this fall.
- The Wild Horse and Burro Environmental Assessment (EA) is out with the comment period ending this week – a public meeting will be held on September 2.
- Had a good meeting with Silver City property owners. Rural Fire Assistance, Wildland Fire and Urban Interface, and clean-up projects were discussed including BLM plans. . Hope to have a preliminary draft out by the end of the year.
- Received \$40,000 to sponsor a cooperative effort with Jordan Valley to do weed mapping and education with the Student Conservation Association. Making good progress on the Cooperative Weed Management Agreement and hope to get that signed.
- Wrapping up the road and trail inventory for the Owyhee Field Office – this will put us in good position as work through the Bruneau RMP. Need to do route designation in the Owyhee Planning Unit, this will involve a lot of meetings with stakeholder groups and public in those communities. A trails coordinator with a good sense of what the public needs has been hired. This will be a big effort since we want to do the route designations. This is important and there should be sufficient funding for Fiscal Year 2005 to accomplish route designations. Jenna said she would make sure the RAC's OHV and Transportation Management Subcommittee is kept informed of these efforts.
- The Stauffer Flat Fence, in Trout Springs Allotment, this was identified in a final grazing decision signed last year. The final decision required that the permittee would construct and maintain the fence and BLM would provide the materials. A cooperative agreement was prepared which outlined the manner in which the fence should be constructed and while the EA didn't talk about the mode of construction it did talk about disturbance to soil and vegetation. In this case, use of a dozer was permitted because of the heavily wooded area and the need for a fence corridor. Photos shown earlier were outside the stipulated area. Smaller equipment will be used in the future and BLM staff will be present for this type of work. Bob Baker asked Jenna to look twice at any complaints about use of the dozer. He said that from personal experience, he can say that use of the dozer is the only way to accomplish the task and that you look at very little real soil disturbance actually occurs.

Four Rivers Field Office – Daryl Albiston

- The Four Mile Herd gather is back on schedule for this fall. Approximately 40 animals will be removed sometime in October. A notice will be sent on this gather.
- Idaho Department of Lands and Boise City are proposing a land exchange with the Forest Service on the Boise Front. BLM will acquire about 4,000 acres in the Boise Front. This is a good land exchange and is still evolving but basically all IDL lands on the Boise front will become BLM. Fish and Game land by Lucky Peak will remain and the Forest Service will also end up with some additional land on the Front.
- Signed a decision to expand beyond the river corridor for treatment of leafy spurge in Washington County – this will be predominantly private property.
- The RAC should commend themselves for the work done by the Payette Fee Demo subgroup. The work this past summer focused on safety education. Response was high and reached many. Idaho Whitewater, as representatives of the RAC subgroup worked with BLM and Forest Service on posters, brochures, quizzes, prizes etc. During

the Payette River cleanup we had 50 volunteers sign up they did a lot of good work. The work day was followed by an awards ceremony to give prizes for participation in the safety awareness campaign. In the future we intend to continue to use the safety information developed this year.

Jarbridge Field Office – Eddie Guerrero

- A contempt of court suit was filed regarding several allotments involved with Temporary Non-Renewable (TNR) forage located out in the Jarbridge Field Office. The judge hearing the case asked to go out in the field, so the judge, plaintiffs, Eddie and Glen, and BLM staff from the Jarbridge Field Office visited some of the TNR allotments to see first-hand whether the plaintiffs accusations had merit. The tour went very well, and Eddie thanked the Judge and his staff, Ron Kay, Glen Secrist, Plaintiffs and Attorneys for their assistance. Following the tour, the plaintiffs requested a negotiated settlement, which has been agreed to by BLM, and the lawsuit has been settled.
- Can now finalize the RCI decision – remaining permittees will not received TNR, this year until NEPA can be completed in order to issue TNR or convert the historical TNR. The District has received \$200,000 from the Director for completion of this EA. Work is underway on preparing a scope of work, and a contract should be let by the end of this fiscal year. BLM is planning to have the EAs completed in 2004.
- The proposed motorcycle race has been changed from spring to fall. This event is insured but is not bonded – Stipulations have been developed that should mitigate impacts to resources. The permit will indicate monitoring and a post race inspection will be conducted. Only two sizeable fires occurred in the Jarbridge Field Office so far during this fire season. They will be rehabilitated naturally.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 18, location to be announced.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Minutes Prepared by: Mary Jones

Certified by:

_____ date _____
Don Weilmunster
Resource Advisory Council Chairman

_____ date _____
Glen Secrist
Lower Snake River District Manager